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Enright, Richard E.

Address of Police Comm.
Richard E. Enright...

[S.I.]

1920

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Enright before the Motor truck association, Octo-
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Box 103

== ADDRESS OF ==

POLICE COMMISSIONER

Richard E. Enright

== BEFORE THE ==

Motor Truck
Association

== OCTOBER 27, 1920 ==

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ADDRESS OF
POLICE COMMISSIONER RICHARD E. ENRIGHT
BEFORE THE
MOTOR TRUCK ASSOCIATION, OCT. 27, 1920

GENTLEMEN :

The transaction of business is the essence and core of American civil life subordinate only to human ethics and domestic happiness. Our resources are immense and it is necessary that we market them with the utmost expedition.

New York City is the national gateway for trade and commerce. It is the source and the port of reception for the most stupendous volume of trade of which the world has any record. Facilities for transportation and flexibility of transportation are of vital importance to the transaction of business. The growth of our city, and the development of the entire country, have been made possible through these agencies.

Taxation depends, in a great measure, upon modern transportation facilities, of which the New York subways are a striking example. Before the advent of the subway, large areas, like the Bronx and Queens, were, from a civic and business standpoint, a howling wilderness. It was a matter requiring some preparation to make a journey to these suburbs, either for business or pleasure, and if one's girl lived there, it was something of an undertaking to make a call and little chance of seeing her more than once a week. In a way, it was worse than going to New Haven, or about ten times as far in point of time as the actual distance traveled.

Modern transportation facilities, in this instance the subway, changed all that. Property in these outlying districts from being an object of suspicion and contempt, came to have a real interest for investors and an immense population has grown up in this territory. Real estate values advanced tremendously; modern apartments blossomed forth almost magically, and conservative downtown real estate investors bought in The Bronx and Queens, with a cheerfulness that apparently had no fears for the morrow. Even the most unemotional and reserved real estate men realized that with improved transportation facilities, such as would be at hand with the opening of the subways, an investment in these territories would be highly profitable. To-day the Bronx and Queens stand as pre-eminent testimonials to the tax-raising potentialities of proper and adequate transportation. They constitute a city within a city, or, I might say, a series of cities within a city, which have been called into being chiefly by a miracle of modern transportation facilities.

Improved methods of transportation built up these localities and provided far better homes and living conditions for the population which formerly occupied the greatly congested sections of the

city, developed business enterprises, opened up new civic centers, improved the sanitary condition of these localities; in short, modern transportation facilities have transformed the entire city. The development of these territories has provided greatly increased revenues in the way of taxes which the city did not enjoy; and many fortunes have been acquired by investors who had the courage and energy to take part in this great enterprise.

All this, however, is only one phase of the transportation problem. There are others of far greater consequence. New York City never will become stagnant for want of commercial life. Ever since its foundation more than 300 years ago, this gateway to western empires has occupied a commanding position as a commercial center which its geographical situation commanding the Atlantic, plus a magnificent harbor, gave to it as its birthright.

For the first time in our history New York presents the unique spectacle of a city which is about to become muscle-bound; a city suffering from the immensity and quantity of business that it transacts. The advent of the automobile provided us with a unit of transportation as far superior to anything that existed before, as was the steam engine to the four-horse stage coach. The automobile has done things that were never predicted of it; parts of this country which to-day would be still under virgin forest, are teeming with civilization; many rich mines of the great west, enormous business enterprises as well as the development of vast agricultural districts have been made possible by the invention and uses of the internal combustion engine.

Nevertheless, the ever increasing number of automobiles in the streets of this city threaten the future normal growth of business here in a manner that must henceforth receive, in a far greater measure, our special concern. Congestion in the city streets has attracted the attention of the city government for many years; and the traffic police have rendered notable service in the regulation of traffic in this city with a perfection and ingenuity which have not only won the applause of our own people, but have established a standard which has been emulated and adopted by practically every city in the United States, Canada, and in many of the capitals of Europe.

The advent of the motor car, which has been of such immense benefit, both for commerce and pleasure, to the people of this city, now threatens by its immense growth to produce a harvest of dragon's teeth.

The number of these machines using the city streets is increasing so rapidly that at certain hours in the day they create a virtual blockade en masse; to control this condition is almost beyond human ingenuity. The result is a slowing down of the very thing these machines are intended to speed up, viz: the transaction of business and the facility of commerce and traffic. Up to a certain point vehicular traffic can be regulated; and it is

being regulated in this city every day by an almost miraculous dexterity, as the records will testify. We have been crowding our main traffic channels more and more, even when the limit appeared to have been reached as happened in the case of the Brooklyn Bridge. However, it is fast reaching a state where the means that are now at our disposal for the regulation and control of traffic seem to be hopelessly inadequate. We are rapidly approaching a condition where, even with the most modern mechanical devices, together with one-way streets, aided by drastic laws and traffic regulations, proper control of traffic is beginning to challenge the ingenuity of experienced traffic officers.

When traffic, and particularly commercial traffic, is stagnated, this city will begin to lose its commercial supremacy; for business once driven from the city, due to inadequate transportation facilities within our business districts, will never return. And furthermore, the cost of handling the business of this city with the tremendous increase in overhead expenses, chargeable to traffic congestion and resulting delays in the transportation and delivery of goods, will make it manifestly impossible for our merchants to compete with business concerns of a similar character in other localities, who are not subject to these conditions and to this unnecessary expense.

This condition of affairs is one that should cause no surprise to persons who are familiar with the history and growth of our city. New York City was not fortunate enough, in its youthful day, to have a far-sighted man plan its thoroughfares as was the case when Washington, the Capitol of the nation was planned. If our forefathers had any conception of the future development and growth of this city, they might have adopted such a plan as was designed for the City of Washington, and provided for our civic centers and future development; but this city in its infancy was left to the tender mercy of our Dutch pioneers, as is shown by the lower section of the city; and even the men of our day were equally short-sighted in neglecting to properly control the city. The upper part of Manhattan is bad and the lower section worse. No improvement has been made in laying out the hitherto unoccupied territory in Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx and Richmond. The mistakes of the past are being made to-day, and there seems to be no comprehensive or satisfactory plan to relieve present conditions by creating broad streets and boulevards which will carry the ever-increasing traffic and commerce.

When Major L'Enfant planned the City of Washington, he provided it with streets and avenues of stately width, and too close convergence of the streets was prevented by many circles of such splendid size, from a civic standpoint, as to suggest an almost regal disregard for possible future property values, in the mind of the man who laid them out. Major L'Enfant had wheels in his mind when he drew up the plans for which Washington is famous, but not of course, automobile wheels. He had not been

through the French Revolution for nothing; he had been quick to learn the need for broad avenues and plenty of parking space for artillery; the narrow streets of old Paris had not lent themselves readily to the maneuvering of artillery in stirring days of the Revolution. The Major determined that we should not be similarly embarrassed on our Capitol city, but it is too bad indeed, that some such genius did not take part in the planning of the future commercial and financial capital of the world, the City of New York. It is quite late, but not too late, to make some improvement even now; and I know of no organization in this city which could have a greater interest in such improvement than your own organization. The arteries of traffic of New York City are little better than those of many an old world city, having none of our traffic problems, and no increases whatever to provide for. If business is to thrive in this city, if the prime consideration is good transportation facilities, which it surely is, and if a high standard of efficiency and effectiveness for which we of New York have become famous, is not to suffer in the eyes of the world, a remedy for the ever increasing congestion of traffic in our streets must be applied in the very near future.

There are some ideas which suggest themselves as a possible solution of this problem. We are getting no assistance whatever from the State of New York. New York City is an integral part of the State, and as such it is certainly entitled to more consideration than it is receiving in this most important matter. The prosperity of the State requires, and its pride in this great city should insure, that this city should not suffer from any lack of attention respecting its proper proportion of state revenues and the benefits thereof.

The State of New York has issued one hundred millions of dollars in the form of two bond issues for state and county highways aggregating 12 330 miles, **outside of Greater New York.**

There have been contributed and appropriated from New York State funds the following amounts during each year 1915 to 1919, inclusive, for the construction and maintenance of state roads **outside of New York City.**

	CONSTRUCTION	MAINTENANCE
1915 . . .	\$8,229,224.57	\$4,051,136.34
1916 . . .	4,137,430.98	4,252,396.72
1917 . . .	3,579,360.59	4,953,226.57
1918 . . .	1,871,161.35	5,541,823.23
1919 . . .	3,244,888.32	6,468,731.30
	<u>\$21,062,065.81</u>	<u>\$25,231,314.16</u>

The City of Greater New York contributes upwards of 70% of state taxes and all funds appropriated by the state, but not one dollar has been expended out of these vast sums of state funds, which include New York City taxes, toward the construction, maintenance, repair or other service to relieve the traffic of this, its greatest city, or provide highways for its commerce and trade.

Irrespective of the legislation which governs such practice, it certainly would seem wretched business for New York City, harassed by traffic problems as no city ever was before, to go on paying more than 70% of the taxes and 70% of a budget like the foregoing and receiving so little benefit from this vast fund. No private enterprise would countenance any such state of affairs and it is difficult to see why a great corporation like New York City should do so or should ever have done so.

There appears to be no one method at present available, by which the traffic problem, a proper solution of which means so much to big business interests in this city, can be effectually solved unless the state and city authorities can cooperate in the building of suitable roadways north and south through the boroughs of Manhattan and The Bronx, or at least, through the Borough of Manhattan. One such roadway upon an elevated structure or possibly in a subway, should be built along the west side of Manhattan connecting with Riverside Drive, West End Avenue and upper Broadway. The elevated road should be removed from Second Avenue and this fine roadway should be well paved from the Willis Avenue Bridge to the lower end of Second Avenue, and should be continued southward to the Battery by widening a street and cutting down some of the greatly congested and unsanitary tenement houses on the lower east side.

The elevated roadway should be taken off Sixth Avenue and placed underground, and this broad avenue, paralleling Fifth Avenue, could be opened for vehicular traffic from Central Park to Washington Square.

The cost of building the subway or elevated structure on the west side should, perhaps, be borne by the State of New York as a part of the good road work which is due this city as some return for the tremendous taxation levied upon this city for good roads throughout the state.

The cost of placing the elevated tracks on Sixth Avenue and Second Avenue underground might be borne by the city. The cost would be considerable in the first instance, but the widening of Sixth Avenue and the erection of splendid business structures along these thoroughfares would so enhance the value of the property for taxation purposes, that the city would soon receive in return all of the money expended on subways and other improvements; unsightly structures would be removed from these important thoroughfares, and it is needless to say that the commerce and business of this city would be tremendously benefited.

A long time ago, a distinguished politician, and great Mayor of this city, suggested that to relieve traffic a street should be cut through the block from Central Park to Washington Square between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The cost of such an enterprise at this time would be much greater than it would have been had the work been done in his day. But it is not too late to

do it now. If such an avenue were cut through, store and building fronts which would be available along this fine avenue would so enhance the value of the property for taxation purposes that the city would soon receive, in taxes, all of the money expended in this enterprise.

Of course, a question will arise regarding the financial condition of the city treasury and its powers of taxation under existing conditions; and it may be suggested that there would not be sufficient funds available to appropriate for this great improvement. Work of this character is not for this day alone; nor should the taxation be entirely levied upon the present generation. Bonds could be issued for a term of at least twenty-five years or more to cover this expense.

Leaving aside the question as to whether or not funds are available, it must be evident to all who take any thought of the future that these are matters that can be no longer delayed, except to the great detriment of the business and commerce of this city, and that we must immediately undertake to do some of this work. It would be three or perhaps five years before the first of these improvements could be available for service, and by that time the traffic conditions in this city will probably have passed beyond any reasonable regulation or control.

The number of automobiles in this city is practically double the number in use in 1916. Any automobile dealer or manufacturer will tell you that he has orders on hand for more than six months or even a year in advance of their possible out-put, and if this rate of increase is kept up, it is evident that the number of motor cars using the streets of this city will double again within the next three years. Do everything we can by the way of traffic regulation and distribution of the traffic load, yet it is evident to even a casual observer that traffic conditions are getting beyond reasonable police regulation and control. We have distributed the load, we have provided scores of one-way streets; we have put into use every available form of traffic regulations, and human ingenuity seems inadequate to devise further effective remedies. Already the curb on both sides of streets and avenues south of 59th street are almost completely filled with parked cars of various kinds during the business hours of the day, cutting down the available roadway for moving vehicles. It is therefore absolutely necessary that we look for and insist upon some physical improvement in the shape of new avenues or new subways of elevated roadways running north and south and these improvements must come without delay.

I think I have detained you too long, but I would like to say one word regarding the increase in the number of fatal accidents in this city, and of course, the same increase of accidents which are not fatal but are more or less serious in their consequences. I have already stated, and I again state that our records show that more than 70 per cent. of the persons who are fatally injured

have been injured through their own carelessness and not through the fault of the operators of motor vehicles; but even so, and allowing that perhaps less than 30 per cent. of these accidents are due to the fault of the driver, there are still more than 200 deaths that must be directly attributable to some form of carelessness, incompetence or recklessness upon the part of the driver; and the corresponding number of the non-fatal accidents, many of which result in serious injuries, must be attributable to the same cause.

There are too many incompetents driving automobiles; there are too many reckless and careless men driving automobiles and we must not overlook one very important reason for these accidents and that is the failure of owners and operators to keep their cars in proper condition so that in case of an emergency they can be stopped. Then there is the question of failure upon the part of many drivers to have any regard whatever for the rights of pedestrians. Many of them seem to take devilish delight in scaring people to death. They sound their signals, much to the annoyance of the whole city at night and at other times when there is no necessity for doing so, and they fail to sound them when they should do so. They travel through congested sections and around corners with insufficient care and without their machines absolutely under control, and in a hundred different ways, including failure to properly display their numbers, provide themselves with proper lights, signal devices and brakes, to say nothing of many other forms of carelessness and recklessness violate the laws and traffic regulations.

These conditions should be looked after in the first instance by the owners of motor cars; they should see to it that their chauffeurs and drivers are competent, efficient and careful; that they keep their cars in good working order and under control, and that they obey the laws and regulations.

About the middle of November, we will begin an inspection of all motor vehicles operating in this city. First, we will take the cars standing still, and later on we will inspect and test them in operation. We will determine whether or not the cars are mechanically in good order, and are properly displaying their license numbers; whether they have serviceable lights and brakes, and otherwise conform to the law, and we will probably discover a great many stolen cars. We will leave with each operator or owner a copy of the traffic regulations and some so-called "Don'ts" which the owners and operators should carefully observe.

We are not looking for an opportunity to serve a summons or make an arrest, but we are endeavoring to correct existing conditions, and do whatever we can to protect the lives and limbs of people who are obliged to use the streets of this city, and they are not all pedestrians, but people who are subjected to unnecessary

danger and injury when they themselves are obeying the law in properly operating their vehicles in our streets.

We are now making investigations which we hope will produce results, and which will to some extent relieve traffic congestion along the waterfronts and in other places where it seems to be absolutely necessary that something should be done. We are considering the advisability of requesting people in certain lines of business to begin business earlier in the morning and quit earlier, while others begin later in the day and continue later in the evening. We are considering the advisability of asking certain concerns to operate their cars and conduct their business at night; and we are willing to cooperate with all of the business interests of this city to the end that the streets may be relieved of unnecessary congestion, and to the end that business may be conducted with the least possible delay and with a minimum of expense.

We are not anxious to pile up a record of arrests or summonses of drivers of motor vehicles. We wish that it were unnecessary to take any action, but, unfortunately, we all know that it is. We realize that in the correction of these violations, we, to a certain extent, interfere with business, and yet this disagreeable work must be done for the safety of all.

We will be very glad to undertake any form of education or cooperation along this line which will improve conditions and bring about the desired results.

In conclusion, I desire to thank you for this opportunity to address you upon this very important subject. The pressure of business at Police Headquarters, particularly during these days when we are fighting through our budget for next year, has so engrossed my time, particularly to-day, that I have been unable to give this subject as much thought as it deserves. I do appreciate the opportunity to lay these rather hastily collected thoughts before you and to ask your support and cooperation in a general movement for the improvement of traffic conditions in this city. First, by securing better roadways; secondly, by agreeing to regulate the hours of business so that traffic can be handled to advantage; and thirdly, by securing better cooperation and understanding with all concerned so far as relates to a strict observance of the laws and regulations, and this includes the important matter of keeping automobiles which cannot be safely operated, off the streets.

After these matters are duly considered, if you believe them to be worthy of attention, I would be very glad indeed if a Committee of your organization would cooperate with the Police Department; and I think I may also say the Mayor of the City will be very glad to cooperate with you in the all-important matter of upholding the business and commerce of this city by improving traffic conditions generally, and by making this city safer for all the people who live here and are obliged to do business here.

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